

WDC BRIEFING

CONFIDENTIAL

25 APRIL 1956

SINGAPORE

- I. Disorders if talks collapse, and collapse now seems likely.
 - A. British won't meet Marshall's last-minute demands.
 - B. Sending troops to Singapore.
 - C. May re-impose direct rule.
- II. Demonstrations likely 1 and 14 May in any event.
- III. Communist-manipulated People's Action Party will benefit.
- IV. Marshall threatens resignation unless British concede.
 - A. British believe Marshall will fall no matter what.
- V. British see only solution in association with Malaya;
 - A. Impossible before August '57.
 - B. Policy: interim control to prevent Communist seizure.
- VI. Prospect: direct rule; continuing violence.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW

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NSC BRIEFING

25 April 1956

SINGAPORE

1. The negotiations for Singapore's self-government, which opened this week in London, may break down, and Communist-inspired disorders in the Colony are probable. London does not intend to meet the demands of Singapore's Chief Minister Marshall which amount, in effect, to full independence within the Commonwealth by next April. Meanwhile, 750 troops from Malaya have been moved to Singapore and 3,000 to adjacent mainland areas. (750 combat troops and 4,000 police were in Singapore previously). If necessary, the British are prepared to suspend the Singapore constitution (granted in early 1955) and reimpose direct rule.

2. Large-scale Communist-influenced demonstrations are expected on May Day and on 14 May, the anniversary of student arrests in 1954 and labor-student riots in 1955. The London negotiations are currently scheduled to close on the latter date.

3. Marshall, an anti-Communist, apparently hoped that his last-minute demands providing for local control of internal security would undercut the popular appeal of the Communist-manipulated People's Action Party which is represented on the all-party Singapore delegation. This party is the chief-drawing card for Singapore's Chinese who comprise 60 percent of the 1,100,000 population.

4. Marshall claims he will resign if he fails to win the concessions for which he has asked. The British feel, however, that even if he won the concessions he would probably soon be forced from office by left-wing elements and that it would then only be a matter of time before effective power would pass into the hands of the Communists.

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5. Britain believes the only solution to the problem of Singapore self-government is some form of association of Singapore with the Federation of Malaya where the government has strong popular support and the problem of Communist subversion has not reached the dangerous proportions that it has in Singapore. Malaya, however, refuses to take on Singapore's Communist problem before its independence target date of August 1957. British policy, therefore, is to maintain sufficient control in Singapore in the interim to prevent the seizure of power by increasingly strong Communist elements.

6. By reimposing direct rule, the British can maintain their hold by force but such a move would necessarily be only a short-range solution and there would be continuing violence.

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